

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SR-02 ORM-03 IO-13 AID-20 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /116 W

----- 019381

R 100849 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1018

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2774

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, UNRWA, XF, IS

SUBJ: UNRWA RELIEF OPERATIONS AND WEST BANK HEALTH SCHEME

REF: TEL AVIV 1777

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SEEMS TO US IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW WEST BANK HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME WILL INDEED GO FAR TOWARD INDICATING DEGREE TO WHICH UNRWA- REGISTERED REFUGEES IN THAT AREA HVE BECOME SELF- SUPPORTING. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE SUGGEST TIME HAS COME FOR USG FORMALLY TO ENCOURAGE UNRWA VERY QUIETLY UNDERTAKE AGENCY- WIDE REVIEW OF ITS RELIEF (ESPECIALLY BASIC RATION- DISTRIBUTION) OPERATIONS WITH VIEW TOWARD CLEARING ITS ROLLS OF REFUGEES FOUND SELF- SUPPORTING AND REDUCING HEALTH SERVICES WHERE POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. UNRWA OFFICIALS HERE EXPECT SOME PROBLEMS WILL ARISE FOR AGENCY WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW WEST BANK HEALTH SCHEME SINCE, AS REPORTED JERUSALEM 249, IT WILL NOT PROVIDE FREE CARE TO CERTAIN WB REFUGEES REGARDED AS " NEEDY" UNDER UNRWA CRITERIA (NOW UNDERGOING REVIEW AND PERHAPS REVISION), BUT NOT SO CLASSIFIED UNDER MORE
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STRINGENT WELFARE CRITERIA USED BY GOI. ISRAELI OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD UNRWA THAT WELFARE CRITERIA FORMERLY USED BY JORDANIAN GOVT ON WB IS TO BE APPLIED UNDER NEW HEALTH SCHEME, AND TO BEST OF AGENCY' S KNOWLEDGE THESE ARE STIPULATED IN 1956 JORDANIAN LAW (REVISED 1963) WHICH SETS MONTHLY INDIVIDUAL INCOME LEVEL OF JD 3 OR MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME LEVEL OF JD 15 AS SUFFICIENT FOR CLASSIFYING PERSONS AS SELF- SUPPORTING. UNRWA NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THIS IS CORRECT, BUT ADMITS ITS OWN CRITERIA ARE NOT ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY (SITUATION IT NOW TRYING TO CORRECT). WILL BE INTERESTING SEE WHETHER GOI ASSESSMENT THAT ONLY ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF WB REFUGEES ARE " NEEDY" AND INCAPABLE OF PAYING NOMINAL FEES WHEN REFERRED TO GOI HEALTH FACILITIES IS BORNE OUT ONCE FINAL FIGURES ON REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT ARE COMPILED. SEEMS CLEAR, IN ANY EVENT, THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW HEALTH SCHEME SHOULD AT LEAST PLACE GOI IN POSITION TO HELP UNRWA IDENTIFY WB REFUGEES EMPLOYED (LEGALLY, AND PERHAPS SOME OF THOSE WORKING ILLEGALLY) IN ISRAEL, NOT TO MENTION THOSE WORKING WITHOUT AGENCY' S KNOWLEDGE FOR MILGOVT AND WB MUNICIPALITIES.

3. WE HAVE LATELY BEEN DISCUSSING INFORMALLY WITH COMGEN AND HIS DEPUTY POSSIBILITY OF UNRWA MAKING AGENCY- WIDE REVIEW OF ITS BASIC RATION OPERATIONS, AND THEY PLAN EXAMINE THIS SUBJECT WITH THEIR WB, EAST JORDAN AND GAZA FIELD DIRECTORS DURING VISITS BY LATTER TO BEIRUT IN COMING DAYS. SHOULD AGENCY DECIDE PROCEED WITH SUCH GENERAL RATION REVIEW, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE INCUMBENT ON GOI TO HELP UNRWA IDENTIFY REFUGEE RATION- RECIPIENTS IN WB (AND PERHAPS LATER IN GAZA) WHO HAVE BECOME SELF- SUPPORTING. SAME APPLIES, OF COURSE, TO HEALTH SCHEME WHERE WE HAVE INFORMALLY URGED UNRWA AVOID RIGID APPROACH AND GO ALONG WITH NEW PROGRAM REGARDLESS OF PROBLEMS THAT WILL ARISE. WHILE RENNIE AND KONTOS SEEM RATHER FAVORABLY INCLINED TO IDEA OF TAKING HARD LOOK AT AGENCY' S RATION OPERATIONS, WE THINK THEY ARE ADOPTING WAIT- AND- SEE ATTITUDE ON HEALTH SCHEME, NOT OPPOSING IT IN PRINCIPLE BUT WANTING TO HAVE MORE INFORMATION ON HOW IT WILL WORK IN PRACTICE.

4. OTHER AREAS, IN OUR VIEW, DESERVING OF HARD SCRUTINY IN ANY EFFORT BY UNRWA TO REVIEW ITS BASIC RATION
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OPERATIONS (BUDGETED AT DOLS 14.1 MILLION IN 1972) ARE

EAST JORDAN AND LEBANON. (ALMOST HALF OF UNRWA BASIC RATION- RECIPIENTS ARE CONCENTRATED IN THESE TWO AREAS, COMPARED WITH ABOUT 40 PERCENT IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ONLY 12 PERCENT IN SYRIA. SYRIA, MOREOVER, HAS TRADITIONALLY BEHAVED BETTER THAN OTHER HOST GOVTS IN HELPING AGENCY MAINTAIN INTEGRITY OF ITS RATION ROLLS.) WE FEAR GOL, DUE TO PRESENT POLITICAL CONDITIONS AND VIRTUALLY TOTAL ABSENCE OF RELIABLE STATISTICS, WOULD FIND ITSELF UNABLE ASSIST UNRWA IN REEXAMINING RATION OPERATIONS IN LEBANON, BUT WE WONDER IF SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR JORDAN. SINCE WE GATHER FROM AMMAN 1128 THAT LITTLE MORE CAN BE EXPECTED FROM GOJ IN WAY OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND ASSUMPTION OF UNRWA SERVICES IN JORDAN VALLEY, MIGHT BE USEFUL TRY ANOTHER TACK AND SEE WHAT COULD BE ACHIEVED IN WAY OF CUTBACKS IN BASIC RATIONS IN EAST JORDAN. WE RECOGNIZE, OF COURSE, THAT SAME POLITICAL CONSIDERATION WHICH APPLIES TO GOL ALSO APPLIES TO GOJ-- E. G., FEAR OF BEING CHARGED WITH EFFORTS TO " LIQUIDATE" REFUGEE PROBLEM. HOWEVER, GOJ MAY AT LEAST HAVE BETTER STATISTICS.

5. SINCE ISRAEL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME CREATES NEW SITUATIONS AND UNRWA IS CONSIDERING REEXAMINING ITS ROLLS OF WEST BANKERS PRESENTLY ELIGIBLE FOR RATIONS AND MEDICAL SERVICES, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR USG TO FORMALLY ENCOURAGE UNRWA TAKE HARD LOOK AT WHAT CHANGES IT MIGHT MAKE IN RELIEF SERVICES IN ORDER ALLEVIATE CONTINUING LONG- TERM FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. SAVINGS MIGHT NOT BE AS SIGNIFICANT AS WE WOULD HOPE (SINCE MUCH OF UNRWA' S BASIC RATION INPUT COMES FROM COMMODITY CONTRIBUTIONS AND THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 357,000 ELIGIBLE CHILDREN NOT RECEIVING RATIONS FOR BUDGETARY REASONS, SOME OF WHOM UNRWA MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED ADD TO RATION ROLLS IN PLACE OF REFUGEES DROPPED ON GROUNDS SELF-SUFFICIENCY). HOWEVER, IT MIGHT HELP UNRWA' S PUBLIC IMAGE (AS WELL AS EFFICIENCY OF ITS OPERATIONS) IF RELIEF SERVICES WERE GIVEN THOROUGH GOING OVER. AT SAME TIME, GIVEN HIGH DEGREE OF FERMENT AMONG PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON AND SYRIA IN AFTERMATH BSO OPERATIONS IN AMMAN AND KHARTOUM, THIS WOULD BE VERY BAD TIME FOR UNRWA OR GOI OR ANYONE ELSE START TALKING PUBLICITY ABOUT MAJOR REDUCTION OF THOSE ON RELIEF.

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6. WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS ON FOREGOING BY DEPT AND OTHER ADDRESSEES.
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